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B O S T O N U N I V E R S I T Y
College of Business Administration

T H E S I S
Commercial Education for the blind
b y
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Preface

The writer first became interested in commercial education for the blind through direct contact with blind students. It seemed that there were great opportunities for improving their welfare through this type of training. In this thesis, it has been attempted to present a representative picture of what is being done in this field in the forty-seven schools for the blind throughout the country, and to suggest future possibilities.

Since this is a comparatively new development in schools for the blind, it has been difficult to gather sufficient material. Little has been written on the subject, and it was necessary to rely strongly on personal interviews and on a questionnaire which was sent to the various schools for the blind. However, this has had its advantages, since it has made it possible to give the most recent and firsthand information.

The author wishes to thank the many people who have been of assistance in collecting the material. Inasmuch as Perkins Institution for the Blind is a local school, much of the information came from there. Miss Sawyer, Librarian at Perkins, has been of great assistance in selecting books and periodicals, as has Miss Ferguson, Head of the Commercial Department, in furnishing the author with the copies of typing included in the appendix. The other teachers and office help at Perkins have been very kind in allowing the writer to observe classes and to do other research work there.

Chapter XVI

Conclusion

Until comparatively recent times, education for the blind was practically unthought of. The first constructive work in this field was begun by Haüy in the latter part of the eighteenth century. This movement was taken up by others, until, today, all civilized countries are endeavoring to give their blind the opportunity to become educated.

The first century of education for the blind was devoted principally to teaching them to use their fingers and in giving them a general knowledge of the classical subjects. According to an old fallacy, the blind were supposed to be born with a compensating talent for music. This resulted in the stressing of music in the schools for them. When one hears some of the results of the excellent training in music that they receive, it is not difficult to understand the origin of this fallacy.

A big stride in the progress of education for the blind is the gradual recognition of the fact that there are individual differences among them, the same as there are among normal people. Originally, all blind students were given the same training. They were taught to use their hands in such skills as weaving, broom-making, chair caning, and piano tuning, or given a thorough education in music, with the hope that they would be able to teach that subject to others. The fact that many of these students had no talent for either the handwork or music was not recognized. If they did not do well in one of these subjects, they were thought to be stupid and not capable of being educated at all.

Every blind student now receives a thorough training in the use of his hands while he is in the kindergarten and lower grades. He is required to take some handwork classes and to study some form of music, but if he does not like either of these subjects and is not successful

at them, he may drop them and take up work for which he is better suited. Many blind students have been successful in colleges and business schools after graduation from high school. A considerable number have become successful as lawyers, and many have taken up teaching. Others have made progress as salesmen, office workers, and many other positions, not dependent upon hand work.

In this thesis, the writer has been particularly concerned with the group of blind who go into business of some form, whether it is in an office or a business of his own. He has tried to show that there is a sufficient number of these successful graduates, and a still larger number yet to come who will succeed in business, if given the proper training, to justify the existence of a sound course in commercial education in schools for the blind. It is evident, from the results of the questionnaire, material gathered from books on the subject, and information gained from talks with educators that commercial education for the blind has progressed rapidly during the past two decades. But it is still in its infancy, and will, in time, develop into a full-fledged recognized program.

Typewriting has already become firmly established as an essential course for blind students. Braille shorthand and dictaphone operating are gradually becoming part of the regular curriculum, and many of the schools have had considerable success with these two courses for a number of years. A large number of students have obtained positions due to the training received in these subjects.

Junior business training is a practical course, and should be required of all blind students. It is, however, but slightly developed in most schools, and it will probably be some time before it is generally accepted.

The social business subjects have a certain amount of value in training the mind of the students to think seriously on complicated and

involved topics. These subjects help them to get a fuller understanding of the daily news events and to better appreciate civic life.

Boston University has been a popular school among the graduates of Perkins Institute. At the present time there is a blind boy in his senior year at Boston University College of Liberal Arts and there are four blind students at Boston University Law School, one of whom, Charles Eaton, graduated cum laude from the Journalism Department at the College of Business Administration in June, 1934. There are now two blind students at this latter department. One of these, Peter Campbell, is taking the Business Administration course and is majoring in advertising. He is taking all the business subjects required, even accounting, although he never expects to be able to use the knowledge gained in this subject in any active way. Mr. Campbell is a strong advocate for business education for the blind.

One of the latest developments for facilitating the acquisition of an education by the blind is the invention of the "Talking Book", a combination electric phonograph and radio set. An average novel, running from 70,000 to 90,000 words can be recorded on between ten and twelve double-faced records, each of which can play eighteen minutes to a side. This will make it possible for the blind to be able to come in contact with more reading matter without the assistance of a reader.

The progress that has already been made in commercial education for the blind leads one to believe that it will receive much more attention in the future.



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